Mason County 2014 Budget Narrative

Current Expense Fund

Mason County’s Current Expense Fund is the County’s “general operating” budget which funds all general county services except roads, utilities and other “special fund” activities.

Conservative fiscal management since 2009 has helped County government weather the recession with few reductions in services. Consolidation of departments and reductions in staffing helped get the County through the worst of the recession. Though 2014 sales and property tax revenue projections remain flat, austere fiscal management has provided a healthy cash balance necessary to address needed growth in services and operations and sets the course for planning to provide more efficient services in the coming years. Additionally, public safety services are augmented by an increase in Road Levy contributions and Washington State “Swift and Certain” funds. One million dollars in revenues from a sale of timber on County surplus property will help pay for operations increases that carry over to fiscal year 2015.

The 2014 Current Expense Fund budgets $27,009,280 in revenues against $28,570,415 in expenditures with an operating reserve of $5,239,165 for a total current expense budget of $33,809,280. $1,560,835 of the anticipated 2013 ending cash balance is used to balance the 2014 budget; $596,542 of which are set-asides for unknown yet anticipated costs including $372,506 for anticipated accrued leave payouts for retiring personnel and $224,036 for anticipated wage and benefit increases resulting from binding arbitration of Deputy Sheriff labor contracts.

Current Expense Budget Highlights

Workforce Compensation
The Mason County management team and union representatives worked hard to successfully negotiate new contracts with 8 of our 11 bargaining units in 2013. Wage and benefit terms and contract durations were brought into line providing parity across bargaining units and more predictability for forecasting wage costs through December 31, 2015 and 2016. Non-union employees and elected officials will receive identical cost of living increases and health benefit contributions. Represented and non-represented employees will receive 1.44% Cost of Living increases and the County will increase its contribution toward health care insurance to $990.00 per month; up from an average of $835.00. Total increase to the Current Expense Fund is $201,392.
Equipment Rental and Revolving Fund
Since 2011, contributions to the County Equipment Rental and Revolving Fund (ER&R) were either reduced or cut completely. This caused the Fund to be unsustainable and prompted a finding by the Washington State Auditor’s Office. County Offices and Departments were asked to absorb 50% of the cost of Fund contribution in their 2014 budgets. The other 50% was added to their budget. Excessive hardships to Departments and Offices were treated on a case by case basis.
Total increase to the Current Expense Fund is $622,214.

Public Safety
Commissioners authorized an increase in the amount of road levy money used for traffic policing activities by $325,000 for a total of $1.2 million. These additional funds will be used to hire 3 new Sheriff’s deputies plus 2 half time Community Service Officer (CSO) positions; one each assigned to the North and South ends of the County. These CSOs will also assist with building code compliance duties; providing increased public safety presence in the community. Other increases in the Sheriff’s budget will pay for replacement of 7 patrol cars, training, replacement of Equipment, Rental & Revolving (ER&R) Fund contributions not paid in 2013 and other operational increases. A new state program called “Swift and Certain” which pays for the care and custody of offenders who are immediately incarcerated if they commit a violation while under community supervision is conservatively projected to bring in $400,000 in new revenues in 2014.
Total increase to Mason County Sheriff’s Office budget is $1,282,268.

Office of Indigent Defense
Case load increases and Supreme Court mandated case load limits for indigent defense attorneys warrant moving from contracting private attorneys to provide indigent defense to hiring attorneys who are County employees. The County will hire 2 Superior Court attorneys and 1 District Court attorney.
Total increase to the Office of Indigent Defense budget is $22,175.

Department of Support Services
A new Department of Support Services is created to consolidate functions that service Departments and Offices countywide. Creating the department will increase efficiency and accountability and provide accurate and timely information necessary for making policy and management decisions. Support functions to be consolidated under the new department include Human Resources/Risk Management, Central Operations, Emergency Management and Information Services. Support and staffing for the Civil Services Commission and the Board of Equalization will also be housed in the department.
Total increase to the Current Expense Fund is $84,210.

Budget Manager
Budget and fiscal analysis, financial forecasting and cost analysis functions will be re-established under the direction of the Board of Commissioners by creating a new Budget Manager position. The Budget Manager will perform comprehensive budget management, long and short range cost analysis, support long range planning, performance measurement, project management and grant administration.
Total increase to the Current Expense Fund is $93,949.

WSU Mason County Extension
The 2014 Mason County budget supplement reflects additional grant funding Mason County will receive from the WA Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), as well as the WA State Department of Agriculture. The DSHS funding will enable WSU Mason County Extension to enhance the Youth in Action program, which provides at-risk teens with the skills and self-esteem to speak up for themselves.
The Noxious Weed Control Board will utilize the Department of Agriculture funding to identify sites with giant hogweed and assist landowners with eradication efforts. Giant hogweed is a large, invasive plant that is particularly harmful to humans when contacted.  

**Total increase in revenues and expenditures to WSU Extension Office is $26,000.**

**Jury Management**

Jury management for Superior, District and Municipal Courts is consolidated under the direction of the Clerk’s Office to streamline the process. The public may now fill out their questionnaire and check for reporting instructions online. The initial cost of the new program was paid for out with Trial Court Improvement Funds. All costs for summoning jurors, including the annual maintenance fee, will be paid from the Clerk’s Budget. Juror fees and costs for both Superior and District Courts will be paid from the Superior Court Budget. Municipal Court will be billed for their costs.  

**Total increase to the Clerk’s Office is $10,469.**

**Public Health and Human Services Fund**

In addition to the direct services provided to Mason County, the Public Health and Human Services Leadership Team and staff are asked to make many community presentations and also serve on many boards and coalitions bringing public health data and information to the table, to demonstrate the interrelatedness between the environment, behaviors and social determinants (housing employment, education, poverty, etc. support structure, etc.) on the health of individuals, families and Mason County communities.

- **Human Services**

  Mason County Public Health and Human Services received two contracts to establish and implement a Community Prevention and Wellness Program in late 2013. The Community Prevention and Wellness Program focuses on reducing the use of alcohol and drugs among students in the Shelton School District. The health and human services department will establish a Community Coalition which will create a strategic plan for the community to address the issue of alcohol and substance use among students in the Shelton School District. Mason County data as well as a recently completed survey (December 2013) that yielded more than 400 citizen responses will inform the work of the Coalition. Once the Coalition completes the five year strategic plan, they will turn to implementation of the plan.  

  **Total increase to the Public Health and Human Services Fund from the first contract for funding from the State of Washington is $47,832.**

  An additional contract (from a Federal grant) in 2014 will provide an additional $36,424.

- **Environmental Public Health**

  2014 will be a year of continuing the permitting and enforcement work we are charged with under state and local regulations. However, in 2014 all programs will place additional emphasis on education and outreach to be more visible in the community.  

  2014 will also see the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) National Estuaries Program (NEP) grant project will come to an end. With the completion of the NEP work, the department will lose one Environmental Health Specialist on September 30, 2014. A new project being done with the NEP funding is an Urban Wildlife project in Allyn. Even with the North Bay sewer in place, water quality continues to be an issue in the marine water in front of Allyn. Onsite and Water Quality staff will walk the streets and alleys in Allyn to look for situations that will attract animals to garbage, outdoor feeders, etc. and they will talk with/leave educational materials for the property owner on best management practices to reduce the impact their current practices are having. We find that often people don’t think about the fact that pet food on the back porch
attracts all sorts of hungry animals adding to the animal waste (fecal coliform) in the urban run-off. Updates on what we learn and that can apply to all densely populated areas throughout the county will be shared during the year.

The biggest need for Environmental Public Health in Mason County into the future is funding for onsite sewage system operation and maintenance and water quality work. The Oakland Bay Clean Water District Advisory Committee feels so strongly that a reliable, stable and sustainable funding sources needs to be identify for water quality work into the future that they will be focusing on that at their 2014 meetings. **No new funding – existing multi-year EPA grant.**

- **Community and Family Health**
2014 will also be a year of continuation of current services to the Community with an emphasis on continuous quality improvement. Ongoing communicable disease surveillance is a basic public health function provided on a 24/7/365 basis. In 2014 the Community Health Improvement Plan Leadership group will begin meeting again. They have not met since the completion of the Community Health Assessment and the Community Health Improvement Plan. **No new funding for Community and Family Health programs.**

**Mental Health Fund**
The first service expenditure of the revenues collected from the 1/10th of 1% Sales and Use Tax for Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Therapeutic Courts was the establishment and implementation of a Family Therapeutic Court (called the Family Recovery Court) in 2013. Establishing a Family Therapeutic Court is a mandate to all counties that impose the tax. A Citizen Advisory Committee appointed by the Board of County Commissioners in 2014 is recommending contracts to provide intensive case management services for individuals and families suffering from mental health and/or chemical dependency in three separate population groups: 1)Veterans; 2) Incarcerated; and 3) At-Risk/Vulnerable population such as those living on the streets and/or at risk of de-stabilization – people with the least capacity to navigate the many systems and circumstances that impact them and lack support. **2014 Increase in expenditure in the Mental Health Fund for new programs is $325,430.**

**Housing Fund**
In 2014 all costs associated with the Housing Program funded from recording fees authorized by the Legislature to reduce homelessness will be paid directly out of the Housing Fund rather than some costs being funded out of the Health and Human Services Fund. This will improve the transparency of costs associated with the Housing program aimed at reducing homelessness. The Host Home Program, which provides housing and other supportive services to homeless youth still engaged in the education system to either graduate or obtain their GED, received increased funding for 2014 to expand services. ESD 113 also received increased funding in 2014 to reestablish the homeless liaison services in the Mason County School Districts that lost those services and the funds leveraged a $143% match from ESD 113. **2014 Expenditures for Homeless Prevention (including rental and utilities assistance) through contracts with 10 community based organization is $467,979**  
2014 **Expenditures for Homeless Shelter Operations through contracts with Mason County Shelter, Turning Point Domestic Violence Shelter and Community Lifeline Cold Weather Shelter is $75,000.**
Road Fund

Mason County Public Works, Roads Department, has the responsibility of engineering, construction, maintenance, and administration of the Mason County road system, which consists of approximately 620 miles of County roadway and 60 bridges. The Board of County Commissioners authorized a 1% increase in the road levy and increased diversion for traffic policing in 2014. The combined result was a decrease in the available County Road funds for use by the Public Works Department. To offset these reductions, Public Works has recognized added efficiencies and implemented some staffing reorganization. We are committed to continuing to provide high quality service to our citizens and maintaining our road system.

- **Maintenance**
  
The maintenance budget includes county road snow and ice removal, vegetation control, removal of debris and repairs to roadway culverts, protecting our roadways and preserving drainage. The county intends to chip seal approximately 40 miles of (nearly 1/10th of our approximately 400 miles of chip seal) arterial and collector roadways to preserve these pavements. We will also work to prepare roads identified for chip seal next year. Approximately 7.5 miles of our 200 mile asphalt pavement system will be paved to provide additional structure to these roadways. We will stripe our arterial and collector system, as well as those local access roads identified for application, approximately 370 miles of roadway. We will continue to maintain our existing signs and will place new road signs at Lakeland Village during the first half of 2014. These will replace the aging wooden signs that have been historically used.

  **The total reduction to this budget from 2013 is $205,000, primarily in personnel.**

- **Operations and Construction**

  Over $4.7 million in grant funds will be utilized to match approximately $628,000 in County Road Funds to deliver projects that directly benefit the Mason County transportation system. We plan to reconstruct the Hunter Creek Bridge on Skokomish Valley Road, eliminating Mason County’s final structurally deficient bridge and opening up the Skokomish River Valley to unrestricted travel.

  We plan to paint the Evers Bridge on Shelton Matlock Brady Road to preserve and protect it and extend the bridge life. Intersection improvements are planned at Lynch/Arcadia Roads and at Shelton Matlock Brady/Schafer Park Roads to improve sight distance and reduce the likelihood of accidents at these locations. We will continue to work on designs for Cloquallum Road, North Island Drive, Little Mission Creek Culvert on North Shore Road, Matlock Brady Road, and Simmons Road, with plans to deliver some of these projects in 2015 and beyond. We will seek funding opportunities where there are shortfalls and strive to complete the most cost-effective, environmentally sustainable design possible. We will begin work on updates to the Transportation Element of our Comprehensive Plan, planned for completion in 2016.

  **The budget for this work is highly variable and depends on availability of grant funds, and schedules for construction projects. Revenues associated with Federal and State grants for project work is nearly identical to last year’s budget. The total reduction in personnel salaries and wages is $290,000.**
• Extraordinary Operations
  In Extraordinary Operations we have budgeted just over $200,000, identical to our budget for 2013. This would cover a small-scale emergency (i.e. a flood, windstorm, etc.) and would allow us to restore service to our County roads. To put this into perspective, expenditures in 2007 were $333,590 and in 2008 were $847,786 for Extraordinary Operations. Since then, we have had minimal expenditures in this category, but we believe that it is imperative that a reserve amount be established to cover possible events in the future until FEMA funds can be distributed to the County in a declared emergency.

• Capital Expenditures
  Mason County Public Works plans to construct a salt storage facility and patch shed at our main yard on Public Works Drive in order to improve efficiency in our operations when applying deicing salt to our roadways. We will install snow stops on the roof of our buildings for safety to our workers, who report to work in even the most adverse weather conditions. There was no change in the Capital Expenditure budget for 2014.

Terri Jeffreys, Chair
Mason County Commissioners